

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5889

As of February 6, 2009

Title: An act relating to flexibility in the education system.

Brief Description: Providing flexibility in the education system.

Sponsors: Senators Hobbs, McAuliffe, McDermott and Oemig.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/05/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: Title 28A of the Revised Code of Washington encompasses the laws related to the common schools and establishes the organizational structure of the common school system. ("Common schools" are public schools operating a program for kindergarten through twelfth grade or any part thereof.) Separate chapters define the roles and responsibilities of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), the State Board of Education (SBE), educational service districts (ESDs), and school districts. Other chapters of Title 28A define requirements for health screening and requirements, traffic safety, compulsory school attendance and admission, compulsory course work and activities, awards, and academic achievement and accountability.

Over the years, school districts have asked the Legislature to ease the burden that state mandates have placed on public schools. Deregulation may provide school districts with the flexibility to reallocate resources, personnel, materials, and training time.

Summary of Bill: The following laws in Title 28A RCW relating to information, notice and reporting requirements, and curriculum and assessment mandates are suspended or delayed, repealed, amended to allow online information unless written information is requested by parents or required only to the extent funds are available.

The following programs or requirements established by law are each repealed:

- SPI must provide information about immunizations.

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- SPI must include information on (1) the proper use of the left-hand lane in traffic safety courses; (2) motorcycle awareness in traffic safety courses; and (3) driving safely among bicyclists and pedestrians in traffic safety courses.
- Any course in Washington State history and government must include content areas such as commerce, the Constitution, state geography, and state history and culture.
- SPI must require districts to annually inform high school students that employers may request transcripts.
- Each school district is encouraged to adopt curriculum for a family preservation education program.
- On or before January 1, 2002, SPI must report to the Legislature on the types of grants awarded under the Washington Civil Liberties Public Education Program.
- A school district must provide general information on Running Start programs to students ten through 12 grades including online courses at higher education institutions.
- Student Learning Plans are required for eight through 12 grade students who were not successful on any or all of the content areas of the WASL or who may not be on track to graduate due to credit deficiencies or absences.

The following programs or requirements established by law are suspended until July 1, 2011:

- School districts must require visual and auditory screening and prepare or provide records.
- Administrators must file a written annual report with the Department of Health (DOH) on the immunization status of students or children attending day care.
- By the end of the 2008-09 school year, school districts must have assessments or other strategies for social studies, arts, and health and fitness. Beginning with the 2008-09 school year, districts must require classroom-based assessments (CBAs) in civics at specified grades.
- School districts must adopt course equivalencies for career and technical high school courses.
- SPI must provide school districts with a list of financial literacy skills, instructional materials, assessments. Each school district is encouraged to provide its students an opportunity to master financial literacy skills.
- SPI must revise a manual of the Washington State Common School Code and provide it to public agencies within the common school system and sell it to other public and nonpublic agencies.
- SPI must provide high schools the contact information for programs offering college credit, including online advanced placement classes. These schools must publish entrance requirements and availability of local programs that lead to college credits.
- SPI must provide an annual aggregate report to the Legislature on the educational experiences and progress of students in foster care.
- School districts must provide all high school students with the option to take the math college readiness test.
- SPI must develop technology essential academic learning requirements (EALRs). By the 2010-11 school year, SPI must develop and make available assessments for the technology EALRs.

The following laws are amended:

- If a school district has received approval for its plan for using learning assistance funds (LAP), it is not required to resubmit a plan unless the district has made a significant change to the plan or a portion of the plan. The Office of SPI must establish guidelines defining a "significant change."
- The annual dropout report is changed to require districts to report in even-numbered years.
- To the extent funds are available, districts must (1) ensure that communications to parents regarding transitional bilingual instruction are appropriately bilingual, and (2) provide in-service training for teachers, counselors, and other staff involved in the program.
- SPI must only provide the appropriate personnel notice of the State Board of Health rules regarding contagious diseases when there are significant changes. Online access to the rules is sufficient.
- SPI must provide access, rather than printing and distributing, rules, records, and forms for visual and auditory screening.
- Public and private schools must provide access to information about the meningococcal and human papillomavirus diseases and their vaccinations. Online access is sufficient, unless a parent specifically requests the information in writing.
- Each school must inform students and parents about compulsory attendance. Online access to the information is sufficient, unless a parent specifically requests the information in writing.
- SPI must prepare and annually provide access to information regarding enrollment options. Online access to the information is sufficient, unless a parent specifically requests the information in writing.
- Providing online access to information about intradistrict and interdistrict enrollment options is sufficient, unless a parent specifically requests the information in writing.
- SPI must collect and disseminate to districts information on child abuse and neglect prevention curriculum and adopt rules for the prevention of child abuse for curriculum use. Providing online access to this information is sufficient, unless a parent specifically requests the information in writing.
- School districts may provide parents with information regarding their rights under the Public Records Act, when requesting school employee discipline records for sexual misconduct.
- Schools must provide notice of pesticide use, upon the request of a parent.
- Schools offering educational pathways must ensure students will have access to the courses and inform the parents about what opportunities are available to the student through the pathway. Providing online access to this information is sufficient, unless a parent specifically requests the information in writing.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill targets unfunded mandates, which are often the biggest complaint from stakeholders. Some of the items in the bill will be pulled out and others will be tweaked. Now is the time to give feedback. While the bill as written has not been completely vetted and is not ready to be passed into law, the direction the bill is headed, as well as the ensuing discussions, are welcome. It is critical to preserve statutes dealing with student achievement, civil rights, health, safety, and federal funding. Agency regulations should be added. The maintenance and food nutrition people are ready to work with the Legislature. With the Learning Assistance Funds, it is appropriate to only provide notice when actual changes are made. Eliminating student learning plans is supported, because there are many other places where this work is done.

CON: The nurses, early learning community, and sexual assault coalition want to offer their expertise on related programs. Eliminating visual screening impacts poor children. People who have worked hard on bills don't have lobbyists to come down and testify on these issues. We pass laws to make the few who will not do the right thing, even if told. Suspensions will cause confusion. If we are concerned about costs, put a moratorium on the WASL.

OTHER: This is not a specific unfunded mandate issue, but rather an underfunding issue overall. The challenges are the unintended consequences – such as which child will miss out on a part of their education when a program is suspended. Use the principal as a filter, if a principal does not know about the mandate, it probably is not needed. We appreciate the intention behind the bill. We are interested in working with legislators on dropout prevention and career technical education (CTE). CTE is not an unfunded mandate.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Hobbs, prime sponsor; John Altman, OSPI; Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators; Dan Steele, Washington State School Directors Association; Mitch Denning, Alliance of Education Association.

CON: Lonnie Johns-Brown, School Nurse Organization for Washington; Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition.

OTHER: Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals; Eleni Papudakis, Workforce Board.